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ABSTRACT

The development of Maori-English bilingual education programs in New Zealand will have these beneficial effects: (1) the educational needs of Maori children, who are likely to be bilingual when they start school, will be met: (2) the maintenance of the Maori language and culture will be fostered: and (3) the indigenous culture will win new appreciation from the English-speaking majority. A large-scale maintenance program will require a major political initiative prior to the development of curricula and teacher training programs. The Maori language is in decline and can be rescued only by a general recognition that it is in the national interest to preserve this indigenous language and culture. (JB)

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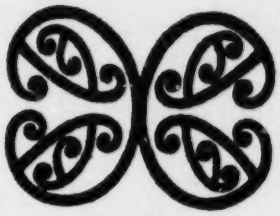

POLICY IMPLICATIONS FOR ENGLISH-MAORI BILINGUAL EDUCATION IN NEW ZEALAND

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INTRODUCTION

This paper is concerned primarily with the policy implications of bilingual education in English and Maori in New Zealand schools. There are three reasons for this. Firstly, Maori, with approximately 70,000 speakers[1], is by far the most widely spoken vernacular in New Zealand apart from English - its nearest rival would be Dutch, with perhaps a little over 20,000 speakers[2]. Secondly, Maori is New Zealand's indigenous language, (in the 19th Century it was frequently referred to simply as 'the New Zealand language')[3], and its future is therefore something which should concern, or at least interest, all New Zealanders. Thirdly, the importance of this particular educational activity has been officially recognized by the Department of Education, with the setting up in 1977 of a bilingual programme using English and Maori in Ruatoki Primary School in the Bay of Plenty, and the establishment in 1978 of an Advisory Committee on English-Maori bilingual education.

The idea and potential of bilingual education is nevertheless, of interest and importance to speakers of languages other than Maori in this country. Because of this, the implications of English Maori bilingual education for persons wishing to maintain or propagate languages other than Maori in New Zealand will be touched on briefly in the course of this discussion.

Over the last two decades the Maori language has become a matter of considerable public interest. Much of the concern and debate springs from the perception that the language is losing ground in some of its old strongholds, and is fast becoming, insofar as fluent speaking ability is concerned, the property of an aging minority of

the Maori population. Not a few people, of course, see this as the inevitable and desirable fate for a tongue described by one nineteenth century observer as 'inadequate to exhibit with accuracy the various processes of civilized intellects'.[4] Others view this process with disquiet.

Many Maori people fear that with the loss of their language, an irreplacable aspect of their identity as an autonomous people will have disappeared. The fact that Maori is unique to New Zealand has given it a symbolic function that also seems to have increased in recent years. Certainly, a living language is a more satisfactory symbol of national identity than a dead one, and there are probably many non-Maori New Zealanders who would feel that New Zealand and not just Maori identity had suffered grievously if the predicted demise of the Maori language were to come to pass.

For all these reasons, the demand for recognition of the Maori language within the school system has intensified, and successive administrations have approved the expansion of courses in the Maori language, first within the secondary school system, and more recently in primary schools. The most recent, and most dramatic development to date in the expanding role of Maori in the formal education of New Zealanders has been the establishment of a bilingual programme at the Ruatoki Primary School, where Maori is now being used as a teaching medium co-equal with English for children from this predominantly Maori speaking community.

Dramatic as this development is, and probably essential if Maori is to remain a viable language for future generations, it brings with it a number of policy questions which will have to be

answered - and the consequences of these answers coped with - sooner rather than later. Some of these questions relate directly to educational policy, but others have ramifications which extend far beyond education, into such matters of public policy as regional development and employment.

JUSTIFICATIONS FOR BILINGUAL EDUCATION

One of the first questions to be answered is 'Why have bilingual schools at all?' One of the reasons advanced in support of the Ruatoki scheme in its early stages was that as most children in that district came to school speaking mainly Maori, their adjustment to schooling would be facilitated if their mother tongue were used in the first few years of their formal education. This attitude is in line with the Unesco declaration of 1953, in which the experts of the day proclaimed that it was axiomatic that the best teaching medium is the pupil's mother tongue.[5] Subsequent research has, however, challenged the validity of the 1953 axiom - it has become clear that under many circumstances the mother tongue is not the best teaching medium[6] - and in any case most Maori speaking children entering New Zealand schools at the present time are probably bilingual, with English as much of a mother tongue as Maori.[7]

Another reason for the establishment of bilingual schools is a desire to assist a minority group maintain and develop their own language while acquiring competence in the official or national language. Closely related to this is a desire by adult members of a speech community (or the educational authorities) to revive a language whose position has been weakened by contact with a dominant language, with children tending to adopt the dominant language and reject the language of the home. These factors have also played a

part in the genesis of bilingual schooling in Ruatoki. Moves such as these, directed at language maintenance, may be made in response to purely local needs, and thus be of an ad-hoc nature, or they may arise from a national policy to encourage maintenance of a minority language - in New Zealand's case, Maori among the Maori people - as part of the development of a culturally pluralistic society.

Attempts to revive a language are also attempts to expand its use. In the case of Maori, there is evidence that national policy may be moving in the direction of encouraging all New Zealanders to acquire some understanding and appreciation of Maori language and culture.[8] Moves to revive and expand the use of Maori through bilingual education could therefore operate on three levels - ad-hoc responses to the desire of individual communities to redevelop their linguistic resources, a concerted move to enable Maori people generally to become bilingual and thus enhance their bicultural status in New Zealand society, or as part of a move towards developing a bicultural society, with a greatly increased number of Maori speakers among New Zealanders not of Maori ancestry. The two latter motivations - developing bilingualism on a national scale either for the Maori or for everyone - imply the development of a new phase of language policy, which would lead to the recognition of Maori as at least the auxiliary national language of New Zealand.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES OF POLICY ALTERNATIVES

Programmes based on the Unesco axiom may be expected to smooth the transition between home and school, and home language and the language of higher education. Thus for Maori speaking children, the use of Maori in the school may be expected to make the atmosphere

of the classroom more pleasant and familiar, and thus provide a better social foundation for progress in acquiring the knowledge and skills which the school offers - including the development of competence in English. It has also been generally assumed that children who first learn to read and write in their mother tongue will probably make better progress in reading and writing a second language than children who do not have the benefit of such a transition. This latter assumption now seems to be more a matter of probability than of indisputable fact.

A language maintenance programme may include some of the assumptions underlying the transitional programmes - for example, that children will be happier and therefore work better in a more familiar environment. But bilingual programmes oriented towards language maintenance also assume that the positive intervention of the school will act as a counterbalance to other social forces which make the position of a minority language tenuous, or strengthen those which support the continued use of a minority language.

Whereas maintenance programmes are intended to have a conservative, or conservationist, effect on language use within particular communities or ethnic groups, revival and expansion programmes, like transitional programmes, place the school in the role of an agent of social change. Thus where Maori is no longer spoken by children, its use as a medium of instruction is introducing something quite unfamiliar into school life. The expected outcome of such a programme is not simply the development of individual bilingualism, but also some wider social consequence - the development of tolerance and appreciation of linguistic and cultural diversity, for example, or

the reconstitution of a Maori speech community at a local, regional, or national level.

WIDER IMPLICATIONS OF VARIOUS OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOMES

Transitional programmes, aimed at increasing competence in English and encouraging Maori children to feel comfortable in the school situation, would require that Maori speaking teachers be appointed to a small number of schools, and necessitate only small-scale curriculum development projects concentrating on the infant school. Among the 350 or more urban and rural localities visited in the course of the linguistic survey of Maori households[9], there were only three areas where the linguistic ecology would justify the provision of this kind of schooling for most children - Matawaia, in Northland, and Ruakoki (which now has a bilingual school) and Tawera (Ngahina) in the Bay of Plenty. There were a larger number of places where a minority of children would be eligible for such schooling if it were available. However almost all children even in the pervasively Maori speaking areas are already bilingual when they enter school. Transitional bilingual education, therefore, does not need to be considered seriously as an educational option for Maori speaking children in New Zealand, although it may well assist children from some immigrant communities to adjust to life in this country.

Maintenance programmes are fundamentally different from those aimed at making the transition from the minority to the majority language easier. The message given, and received, in transition programmes is simply 'your language is fine, perhaps, at home, and for five and six year olds to learn in, but its of no use in the outside world; your real job is to learn English'. A programme

aimed at language maintenance, however, tacitly or explicitly recognizes that the minority language has inherent value, and is not to be taken lightly.

Programmes aimed at maintenance of the Maori language, even in a single community, require serious curriculum development work. This task will increase in complexity as bilingual education is made available in all districts where even a minority of children are still Maori speaking - an extension which is of the greatest urgency if the language is to survive.[10] Not only does the language ecology of each area exhibit its unique features, which have to be taken into account if a bilingual curriculum is to be successfully implemented, but coordination with outside agencies, and parents, is essential for the long term success of such a scheme. Experience in New Zealand has made it obvious that a language cannot be maintained indefinitely through the unaided efforts of the home, and it is unlikely that the school, by itself, will fare any better.

The combined efforts of home and school to maintain the Maori language will have to be supplemented by the provision of adequate teacher training facilities and resource materials on the part of the educational establishment, development assistance to Maori speaking communities from government agencies (so that these largely rural areas can regain economic viability), and the utilization of the bilingual skills available in these areas by public and private employers. Much greater co-operation in the provision of Maori language broadcasting, particularly from the television channels, is also essential if Maori is to flourish as a vernacular even at a local level.

Language expansion programmes, whether directed primarily at the Maori community or extended to all New Zealanders, require even more

extensive research and development activities. They would also necessitate the full co-operation of development agencies, employers, and, especially, the Broadcasting Corporation.

At the educational level, maintenance and expansion programmes, if they are to have any long term significance, must be planned in such a way that there is an assurance of continuity from primary school through to the seventh form level in those areas where English-Maori bilingual programmes are implemented. A lesser goal will convert such schemes into token gestures - a covert form of transitional bilingual education aimed ultimately at linguistic assimilation rather than the maintenance of diversity. Stability of staffing, and a supply of adequately trained bilingual teachers - is also important for such schools. Special selection procedures for staff, taking into account the necessity for bilingual competence, must also be agreed on by the Department of Education, Education Boards, and the teachers' unions.

But serious attempts to maintain or expand the use of Maori cannot succeed unless the work of the school and the family is also supported by other social forces. Bilingualism must carry with it, for example, economic as well as intellectual or aesthetic advantages. Jobs must be available which require bilingual skills - in government (including the school inspectorate), the courts (including the judiciary), in private employment, and in the communications media. In certain areas of the country - for example, Mangonui, Mokianga, Whangaroa, Bay of Islands, and Whangarei Counties in Northland, and Whakatane, Opotiki, Waiapu, Waikohu, Cook, and Wairoa Counties on the East Coast, with their internal boroughs and cities - it should be made possible for anyone to transact public business and much private

business solely in the Maori language with no less convenience than would be the case if English were to be used. People must know that Maori is an acceptable language for a wide range of purposes, and be encouraged to use it. Perhaps the Maori members of Parliament could give a lead in this respect - they have an excellent precedent in the attitude of the late Tau Henare, MP for Northern Maori from 1914-1938, who always spoke in Maori when he had especially important points to make.[11] If this became the fashion also amongst members of local bodies, employment opportunities for interpreters would certainly be enhanced.

It is apparent that any move into English-Maori bilingual education beyond a transition-type programme represents *a major political initiative*. The recent setting up by the Education Department of a committee to advise that Department and the Minister of Education on matters related to bilingual education in English and Maori is perhaps a sign that the potential significance of the largely ad-hoc moves in relation to Ruatoki School is being recognized. But the fact that both the school and the committee are functioning is, one would hope, also a sign that the climate of political and public opinion is becoming more favourably disposed towards languages other than English, and particularly towards the Maori language. This is a matter which does not, however, concern the Department of Education and its Minister alone. The development of English-Maori bilingualism in New Zealand should also find a prominent place in the deliberations of the Planning Council and the Commission for the Future.

THE STATUS AND STANDARDIZATION OF MAORI

In the development of policy for English-Maori bilingual education there is a fundamental question concerning the language itself which must be dealt with : *what is the status of the Maori language in New Zealand?*

According to the Maori Affairs Amendment Act 1974 'official recognition' is given 'to the Maori language in its various dialects and idioms as the ancestral tongue of that portion of the population of New Zealand of Maori descent'. The act also empowers, but does not *require*, the Minister of Maori Affairs to encourage the learning of the Maori language 'in its recognized dialects and variants... both within and without the [Maori Affairs] Department'.[12]

The stress on *dialects and variants* means that there is no legislative provision for the standardization of Maori - a process which is as essential as it is likely to be controversial if Maori is to function as a fully developed modern language within New Zealand. There is certainly a most urgent need for the establishment of some kind of *runanga* or guardian body to discuss and arbitrate on matters of terminology and other aspects of language development. Professor Whatarangi Winiata of the Victoria University of Wellington recently advocated the appointment of an official trustee for the Maori language, who, assisted by a permanent staff and an advisory council, would be responsible for taking steps to conserve and develop this unique national resource.[13] Whatever its form, such a body should be established as soon as possible, presumably under the aegis of the Minister of Maori Affairs, who currently has the statutory responsibility for such matters. Such a body should be, in both

appearances and reality, firmly under Maori control, however - not simply because most Maori speakers are ethnically Maori, but also to ensure that the language retains its Maoriness, that is, to make sure that the process of modernization takes a Maori form, and does not result in an aberrant form of English disguised by Maori-sounding vocabulary.

At present Maori is simply recognized as the ancestral tongue of people of Maori descent. This is an empty statement in its legal context, and implies no commitment to the spread of the language outside the Maori community (except insofar as some persons of Maori ancestry do not regard themselves as Maori). Since a great many non-Maoris are also studying the language, it is likely that the desire for English-Maori bilingual schooling will eventually be expressed by at least some segments of the English-speaking non-Maori community. The official recognition of Maori as the aboriginal language of New Zealand would give such people some claim to participate in this new educational experience.

It would be wise, however, to exercise caution in the early stages in extending Maori language education to non-Maori communities. This is not because such a development is undesirable - quite the contrary. But the fact remains that the Maori language *is* the ancestral language of the Maori people, and it is largely because of the overwhelming pressure from the English speaking community that the existence of Maori is currently threatened. Common justice would seem to demand, therefore, that, until the future prosperity of the language is better assured, the priority in developing bilingual education facilities be given to those

areas of Maori population where the language is still strong, or where the Maori population has expressed a clear commitment to supporting an attempt to revive the language. This does not preclude early attempts to extend English-Maori bilingual education outside the boundaries of the Maori community, but such projects should complement and not supplant those intended primarily for the benefit of Maori children.

BILINGUAL EDUCATION IN MINORITY LANGUAGES OTHER THAN MAORI

If the weakest justification for the development of programmes using Maori as a medium of instruction - that is, easing the transition from home to school or from Maori to English - is the operating principle for government policy, it will be difficult to deny the claims of migrant groups for equal treatment in this regard. In fact, such migrant groups - Greeks, Italians, Chinese, Dutch, Samoans, Cook Islanders, to name just a few of the more numerous - probably have even better claims than most Maori families for special treatment in this regard. As the basis for government policy therefore, the Unesco declaration and its variants would undermine the status of Maori still further, and greatly favour voluntary immigrants over an indigenous linguistic minority who have no other motherland from which to draw inspiration.

If the stronger justifications for English-Maori bilingual education are fundamental to government policy - that is, those related to the development of Maori as *a national language* (not necessarily *the* national language) - claims by migrants cannot be related to the treatment of Maori. They constitute a completely separate issue.[14]

Again, this is not to say that any aspirations among migrant groups for some degree of education in their ancestral tongues should be ignored. In fact, it is certainly not in New Zealand's interests to squander any of her resources, linguistic, cultural, or physical. Nonetheless, the greatest claim and the greatest need is that of the Maori population, and it is this claim and need which should be met first. All other languages spoken here are well represented in other lands; their loss may be a personal tragedy, but it is not a complete social disaster. Maori, on the other hand, thrives in no other soil; its disappearance would represent a disaster at the personal and social levels from which the country would never quite recover.

CONCLUSION

Until the basic policy options have been thought through, and the decisions taken, no guidelines can be laid down for the development of bilingual programmes in New Zealand.

If it is decided that the national interest does demand that an effort be made to assist the maintenance or revival of Maori through bilingual schooling, this must also be accompanied by the provision of adequate teaching personnel and material resources. In many communities, parents will undoubtedly have to be convinced that the revival of the language will serve a useful and beneficial purpose: after generations of anti-Maori, pro-English propaganda, the new official attitude towards Maori will be hard for many people to comprehend or accept. Time will be needed, and temporary failures must not be allowed to eclipse potential long term success.

In the long run, English-Maori bilingual education will undoubtedly benefit all New Zealanders, irrespective of ethnic and linguistic origin or affiliation. Not only will the country gain through the presence of a living symbol of its uniqueness, but a favourable climate for bilingualism in English and Maori will undoubtedly make it less difficult for speakers of other languages to maintain the languages of their former homelands in their adopted country. In this way, linguistically and socially, New Zealand may well justify its claim to be Pacific's triple star.

1. An estimate based on the sociolinguistic survey of Maori Households - see the paper 'Who speaks Maori in New Zealand', prepared for the first session of this symposium.

2. Based on statistics for ethnicity and birthplace, in N.Z. Census of Population and Dwellings 1971 - Volume 7 (Department of Statistics, Wellington, 1975).

3. As late as 1892, for example, the fourth edition of Williams' dictionary was published under the title of A Dictionary of the New Zealand Language.

4. A.S. Thompson, The Story of New Zealand, Past and Present, Savage and Civilized (John Murray, London, 1859), p.84.

5. The Use of Vernacular Languages in Education (Monographs on Fundamental Education 8, UNESCO, Paris, 1953).

6. See especially Patricia Lee Engle, 'Language medium in early school years for minority language groups' Review of Educational Research 45.2, 1975, pp.283-325.

7. Enquiries made by the Maori Unit, NZCER, in July 1977, for example, indicated that all 5-year-olds enrolled at Ruatoki school at that time were bilingual, and for three English seemed to be the stronger language for self expression.

8. In 1977, 153 secondary schools taught Maori to more than 13,000 pupils; in 1976 240 primary schools were teaching Maori to over 45,000 pupils (Report of the Department of Education, Wellington, Government Printer, 1978, p.29). A substantial proportion of these pupils are not of Maori ancestry.

9. See R.A. Benton 'The Maori Language: Patterns of use in contemporary Maori society', New Zealand Speech Therapists Journal, Vol. 32, No. 1, 1977; also note 1, above.

10. See 'The Maori Language in the ninteen-seventies', a paper prepared by the author for the symposium 'The Future of Vernacular Languages in the Pacific', 49th ANZAAS Congress.

11. See, e.g. his speeches of May 31, 1916 (Parliamentary Debates, Vol. 175) and October 10, 1930 (P.D. Vol. 226).

12. No. 73, 1974, Section 51.

13. Proposal made and discussed at a hui sponsored by the Raukawa Trustees, Raukawa Marae, Otaki, December 1-3, 1978.

14. For an extended discussion of this issue, see R.A. Benton, 'The role of ethnic languages in the education of New Zealanders' in Education in CHANGE in Education, (Auckland, New Zealand Educational Institute, 1976), pp.132-144, also Delta 19, 1976.